

Agriculture, Rural Development, Food & Drug Administration Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2020 Highlights

(Note: Numbers are nationwide program funding levels.)

Improving Nutrition and Food Security

- **Micro-Grants for Food Security Program:** Includes \$2 million for the Micro-Grants for Food Security Program, which was created by Senator Murkowski in the 2018 Farm Bill, to help support Alaskans' ability to grow their own food.
- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP):** The bill includes over \$69.1 billion for SNAP, to help fully meet the needs of food-insecure working poor, seniors, military families and others low-income families afford healthy food.
- **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC):** Provides \$6 billion for WIC to support the health of low-income women, children, and infants by providing nutritious foods to supplement diets, referrals to health care, and information on healthy food.
- **Summer Food Service Program (SFSP):** \$526.3 million for the SFSP to help ensure no child goes hungry during the summer and school holidays.
- **Access to Healthy Meals:** Understanding that in many rural areas, children who rely on school meals to avoid hunger are unable to access locations at which SFSP meals are provided, either due to lack of transportation or lack of actual sites in their area, the bill includes language directing USDA to allow program providers to implement innovative methods for delivering meals to children who cannot access a SFSP site. The bill also encourages USDA to include more healthful fish in the WIC program, and to include more traditional foods like salmon and caribou in the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations.

GE Salmon and Seafood

- **Genetically Engineered (GE) Salmon:** Building on her previous efforts to inform consumers they are purchasing GE salmon, Senator Murkowski secured a provision which prevents any food containing GE salmon from entering the U.S. Market until a consumer study is completed to determine the effectiveness of USDA's recent labeling guidelines.

- **Seafood Labeling:** The bill includes report language directing USDA to begin engaging with stakeholders to determine the feasibility and framework for establishing organic standards for wild caught seafood. It also includes language again directing FDA to revise and reissue its flawed seafood advice document so that it accurately reflects FDA's own nutrition science on the benefits of eating fish.

Supporting Farmers and Ranchers

- **Reimbursement Transportation Cost Payment for the Geographically Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (RTCP) Program:** Includes \$2 million to reimburse farmers and ranchers in geographically remote areas of the United States, including Alaska, for the high costs of transporting agricultural commodities, to help farmers and ranchers compete on a more level playing field with producers in the Lower 48.
- **National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS):** In support of Alaska's growing floriculture industry, the legislation includes an increase of \$500,000 to allow the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) to produce the Floriculture Crops Report, and directs the agency to include data from Alaska.

Research and Education

- **E-Cigarettes and Vaping:** Dovetailing Senator Murkowski's longstanding efforts to protect youth from becoming addicted to e-cigarettes and vaping products, the bill includes language directing the FDA to work with the CDC and other agencies to investigate the recent outbreak in pulmonary illnesses likely caused by low quality or adulterated vaping products that contain THC. The bill requires the FDA to collect information to help determine the next steps to respond to the uptick in these illnesses.
- **Blue Carbon:** Includes an amendment cosponsored by Senator Murkowski to provide \$3 million for a working group to study ocean-based carbon, such as kelp and seagrass, and how they could help deacidify oceans and mitigate climate change. The working group is also tasked to coordinate and conduct research to develop and enhance emerging ocean farming practices to produce a feedstock for agriculture and to develop other scalable commercial applications for kelp, seagrass, or products derived from kelp or seagrass.
- **Agricultural Research Service (ARS):** Senator Murkowski included language that encourages USDA's ARS to provide direct, place-based assistance to universities in states like Alaska that do not have ARS facilities to address priorities such as invasive

plants and insects, aquaculture, and the development of crops to increase food security and expand farmers' marketing opportunities.

Energy and Water

- **Rural Water and Wastewater:** The legislation includes \$1.45 billion for rural water and waste program loans to further develop rural areas.
- **High Energy Costs Grants Program:** Provides \$10 million to help offset the high costs of energy in remote communities. This is vital funding for villages whose energy costs exceed the national average by 275 percent, or more. In the past, this funding has been used to construct wind and small hydroelectric power system upgrades and transmission upgrades in remote villages that are still dependent on diesel fuel.

Rural Housing and Infrastructure

- **Rural Rental Assistance program:** Includes \$1.3 billion for the Rural Rental Assistance program to reduce the rent paid by low-income families.
- **Rural Housing Assistance Grant:** \$45 million is provided for the Rural Housing Assistance Grant, to help low-income homeowners improve, repair, or eliminate safety and health hazards from their rural homes.
- **Community Facilities Loans and Grants:** Funds the Community Facilities Loans and Grants at \$45.7 million, to develop essential community infrastructure in rural Alaska and Native villages to help ensure these communities are able to reach the same basic quality of life of those living in urban areas.
- **Rural Broadband and telephone infrastructure:** The bill includes \$6.9 billion for rural electric and telephone infrastructure loans and \$64 million for Distance Learning, Telemedicine and Broadband grants.
- **ReConnect program:** Senator Murkowski included language which addresses some of the unique challenges in Alaska when it comes to rural broadband by urging the Rural Utilities Service to consider ways that unserved areas in Alaska could receive substantial benefits of the ReConnect program.

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